

RYAN PREPARED OPENING STATEMENT
HBC HEARING – WAR COSTS
OCTOBER 24, 2007

Since the beginning of the 110th Congress, we've had repeated and vigorous debates about the war in Iraq, and its costs. We've heard comparisons about how much we are spending on the war as opposed to children's health insurance, or education programs, or what have you. But nothing has really changed: the President continues to send his war funding requests to the Hill, and, in the end, he continues to get what he asks for. And when asked in a recent debate, *none* of the top Democratic presidential candidates was willing to commit to having troops out of Iraq by as far in the future as 2013.

So the bottom line seems to be this: as long as we have troops in Iraq, Congress will provide the funding for them.

That being the case, we should continue to finance the war responsibly – and this committee has led that effort.

During the 108th Congress, this committee was the first to include an estimated amount for war costs in the bottom line of our budget. In the 109th Congress, at the urging of this committee, the President followed suit, including his war funding recommendations in the administration's annual budget submissions.

The 2008 supplemental request was included in the administration's budget proposal in February, and the Democratic budget resolution did accommodate this amount. But it is not included in the Defense appropriations bill passed by either the House or the Senate; and the Democratic majority has put off deliberation on the supplemental until after the New Year. In addition – and quite inexplicably to me – the majority has failed to pass the regular defense appropriations and military construction bills, even though both passed the House and the Senate overwhelmingly.

The fiscal year began 24 days ago, and I distinctly remember the Deputy Secretary of Defense testifying before this committee in July that delays in funding are disruptive to our men and women on the ground and in harm's way. So it seems we really should get on with it; it's why we are here.

We all know that the war entails many costs that cannot be measured in dollars. But it's in the area of funding where Congress has its greatest impact; and as long as the funding is going to continue, we have an obligation to provide it responsibly.